

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASUNCI 01740 301234Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0013
USDOC WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 1740

E.O. 1165: N/A
TAGS: BENC, ENRG, PFOR, PA, BR
SUBJ: POWER FREQUENCY FOR ITAIPU TURBINES

REF: A) ASUNCION 1580 B) BRASILIA 3349

1. ON APRIL 22 THE GOVERNMENT OF PARAGUAY ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION TO STUDY AND EVALUATE ALTERNATE COURSES OF ACTION TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PARAGUAYAN AND BRAZILIAN ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS. THE COMMISSION, WHICH IS HEADED BY MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR DR. SABINO AUGUSTO MONTANARO, INCLUDES HIGH LEVEL TECHNICIANS FROM ITAIPU AND YACYRETA, ONE MEMBER EACH FROM THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF DEPUTIES, AND A REPRESENTATIVE EACH FROM THE ARMED FORCES, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND THE NATIONAL PLANNING BOARD. THE COMMISSION IS TO REVIEW ECONOMIC AND JURIDICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL AS TECHNICAL STUDIES IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WHETHER PARAGUAY SHOULD REMAIN ON 50 CYCLE CURRENT, WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE COST OF THE TURBINES, OR SHOULD CHANGE TO 60 CYCLES. ACCORDING TO PARAGUAYAN
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SOURCES, THE DECISION MUST BE MADE BY JUNE.

2. THE DECISION WILL NOT BE EASY FOR THE GOP. ECON-
OMICALLY AND TECHNICALLY A SWITCH TO 60 CYCLES WOULD SEEM TO BE MOST DESIRABLE. HOWEVER, POLITICALLY SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT . APART FROM THE INCONVENIENCE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE MOVE WOULD

UNDOUBTEDLY AROUSE LATENT POPULAR HOSTILITY TOWARDS BRAZIL, WHICH DATES BACK TO THE WAR OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE, AND WOULD LAY THE GOVERNMENT OPEN TO CRITICISM FROM PARAGUAY'S PRO-ARGENTINE PRESS AND OPPOSITION PARTIES. MOREOVER, A SWITCH TO 60 CYCLES WOULD PUT PARAGUAY OUT OF PHASE WITH ARGENTINA, THUS CREATING POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES WITH YACYRETA AND CORPUS, NOT TO MENTION RISKING GENERAL ARGENTINE DISPLEASURE.

3. ING. DE BERNARDI, PARAGUAYAN DIRECTOR OF ITAIPU, HAS TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT THE DECISION NOW IS A POLITICAL ONE. ALTHOUGH AS AN ENGINEER HE APPRECIATES THE TIDINESS AND ELEGANCE OF A SWITCH TO 60 CYCLES BY PARAGUAY, HE UNDERSTANDS THE POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WOULD NOT FIGHT A DECISION TO RETAIN PARAGUAY'S 60-CYCLE SYSTEM.
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Message Attributes

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